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Portraiture of William Penn.

MEMORIAL
CONTRIBUTIONS TO HISTORY.

VII.

Portraiture of William Penn.

BY

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Respectfully Inscribed to

MRS. ANNE HOPKINSON FOGGO,

MRS. HENRY WHARTON,

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

PORTRAITURE OF WILLIAM PENN.



WILLIAM PENN IN ARMOR (AFTER SCHOFF'S STEEL ENGRAVING FROM THE ORIGINAL).

THERE are few historical pictures that have taken firmer hold of the public mind, within the last hundred years, than West's painting of Penn's Treaty with the Indians. The event which it depicts is uniformly regarded as the most memorable in the history of the settlement of America: typical of just dealing with the aborigines, it is described by an English historian as "the most glorious in the annals of the world." Our own

Bancroft contemplates with pride the meeting of William Penn, surrounded by a few friends in the habiliments of peace, with the numerous delegation of the Lenni Lenape tribes. "The Great Treaty was not," says he, "for the purchase of lands, but was held for confirming what Penn had written and Markham covenanted; its sublime purpose was the recognition of the equal rights of humanity."

"The Great Spirit"—such were William Penn's own words—"who made you and us, who rules the heaven and the earth, and who knows the innermost thoughts of man, knows that I and my friends have a hearty desire to live in peace and friendship with you, and to serve you to the utmost of our power. Our object is not to do injury, but to do good. We are here met on the broad pathway of good faith and good-will, so that

children's children while the creeks and rivers run, and while the sun, moon, and stars endure."

While we accord due honor to Roger Williams and to Lord Baltimore, we seek in vain for any specific grant in the fundamental laws of Rhode Island or Maryland for such a concession as that made by William Penn, and rendered effective by this very Treaty, not sworn to, and never broken :



"PENN'S TREATY WITH THE INDIANS"—BY BENJAMIN WEST.

no advantage may be taken on either side, but all shall be openness, brotherhood, and love. I would not compare the friendship now sought to a chain, since the rain might rust it, or a tree fall and break it; but the Indians shall be esteemed by us as the same flesh and blood with the Christians, and the same as if one man's body was to be divided in two parts, and, as such, the ground should be occupied as common to both people."

According to some authorities, he presented them a copy of the compact, telling them to preserve it carefully for three generations, that their children might see and know what then passed in council as if he remained himself with them to repeat it, but that the fourth generation would forget both him and it, and he desired this league of friendship to be preserved "between our children and our

"Every inhabitant, artificer, or other resident in the said Province that pays scot and lot to the Government shall be deemed and accounted a Freeman of the said Province,"—and

"Article XXXV. That ALL persons living in this Province who confess and acknowledge the one Almighty and Eternal God to be the Creator, Upholder, and Ruler of the world, and that hold themselves obliged in conscience to live peaceably and justly in civil society, shall in no ways be molested or prejudiced for their religious persuasion or practice in matters of faith and worship; nor shall they be compelled at any time to frequent or maintain any religious worship, place or ministry whatsoever."

Such were the words, prepared in April preceding, and inscribed upon the cornerstone of the Commonwealth laid by William

Penn under the famous Elm at the close of November, 1682; and, as the sequel proved, they were not idle words.

While the right is claimed to point out the anachronisms of West's picture, and to object to the incongruities it presents, let us not forget that West had not the materials for research nor the time to devote to this special subject; the purpose is not to criticise, but to point out facts and the *realities* of the hero as well as of the event he has thus no little contributed to commemorate.

It will be remembered that before West painted in England, all British historical figures had appeared in a masking habit; "the actions of Englishmen seemed all to have been performed—if costume were to be believed—by Greeks or by Romans." In "The Death of Wolfe" Mr. West was the first to dismiss this pedantry and restore nature and propriety. With this period of 1758, its costumes and its habits, Mr. West was familiar;* but Penn's Treaty—apparently the very next historical subject he attempted—had taken place eighty-eight years before. He was, of course, not personally familiar with the costume of 1682, and he apparently essayed to introduce no contemporaneous portraits, save that of Penn himself.

In seeking some representation of Penn, he seems to have lighted upon the original bust (or its reproduction), which it was known was carved by one Sylvanus Bevan, and under these circumstances, as related by Dr. Franklin in a letter to Henry Home, Lord Kames.

When old Lord Cobham was adorning his garden at Stowe with the busts of famous men, he made inquiry for a picture of William Penn many years after the death of

the latter, but could find none; whereupon Sylvanus Bevan, an old Quaker apothecary, remarkable for the notice he took of countenances, and a knack he had of cutting in ivory strong likenesses of persons he had once seen, hearing of Lord Cobham's desire, set himself to recollect Penn's face, with



ADMIRAL PENN.

which he had been well acquainted. He accordingly cut a bust in ivory, and sent it to Lord Cobham without letter or notice; whereupon "my Lord, who had personally known Penn, immediately exclaimed, 'Whence came this?—it is William Penn himself!'" From this little bust the large one in the garden was formed.*

The latter became West's model, and upon it he stuck a broad-brimmed hat, clothing the figure in drab, and making it corpulent enough in consistency with this bust, but utterly at variance with the now known

* "The subject I have to represent," said West on this occasion to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who objected to throwing aside the classic garb, "is a great battle fought and won, and the same truth which gives law to the historian should rule the painter. If, instead of the facts of the action, I introduce fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity? The classic dress is certainly picturesque; but, by using it, I shall lose in sentiment what I gain in external grace. I want to mark the place, the time, and the people, and to do this, I must abide by truth."

Reynolds subsequently seated himself before the finished picture, examined it minutely for half an hour, and then said: "West has conquered; he has treated his subject as it ought to be treated; I retract my objections. I foresee that this picture will not only become one of the most popular, but will occasion a revolution in art." Even in this case, however, Mr. West did not escape some incongruities in its execution.

* "Toward the close of the year 1750, Dr. Franklin, together with his son, the late Governor Franklin of New Jersey, visited Scotland. While in that country, the Doctor received particular attentions from the celebrated Henry Home, Lord Kames (a character well known in the literary world, with whom he then passed some days, at his Lordship's country-seat in the shire of Berwick. From this commencement of their personal acquaintance with each other, a correspondence subsisted between Lord Kames and the Doctor, until a few years before the death of the former, which occurred in the year 1782, when his Lordship was in the eighty-seventh year of his age. It appears that some time prior to the year 1760, Lord Kames had offered to Dr. Frank-

appearance of Penn at the age of 38, when he met the Indians first in council.

In an admirable sketch of the private life of William Penn, Mr. Joshua Francis Fisher very justly says: "Mr. West, and I believe all other painters who have introduced the early Quakers into their pictures, are chargeable with great mistakes in the costumes they have selected for them; in many instances giving them hats and coats of a form not even invented for half a century after the date of the scene they have wished to represent upon their canvas." Mr. Fisher

lin the loan of 'Penn's picture;' for, in a letter to his Lordship from the Doctor, written from London on the 31 of January, 1700, he refers to this offer. It will appear, however, by the Doctor's letter, that he conceived the picture to be a portrait of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania;—perhaps, from Lord Kames having only mentioned it as being 'Penn's picture,' without designating him as *Admiral Penn*. That part of the Doctor's letter which relates to this subject, is in these words:

"Your Lordship's kind offer of Penn's picture is exceedingly obliging. But, were it certainly his picture, it would be too valuable a curiosity for me to think of accepting it; I should only desire the favor of leave to take a copy of it. I could wish to know the history of the picture before it came into your hands, and the grounds for supposing it his. I have at present some doubt of it: first, because the primitive Quakers used to declare against pictures as a vain expense; a man suffering his portrait to be taken, was condemned as pride; and I think to this day it is very little practiced among them. Then, it is on a board; and I imagine the practice of painting portraits on boards did not come down so low as Penn's time; but of this I am not certain.' His 'other reason' is stated in the text: 'I doubt, too,' Franklin goes on to say, 'whether the whisker was not quite out of use, at the time when Penn must have been of the age appearing in the face of that picture. And yet, notwithstanding these reasons, I am not without some hope that it may be his, because I know some eminent Quakers have had their pictures privately drawn, and deposited with trusty friends; and I know also that there is extant at Philadelphia, a very good picture of Mrs. Penn, his last wife. After all, I own I have a strong desire to be satisfied concerning this picture, and, as Bevan is yet living here, and some other old Quakers that remember William Penn, who died but in 1718, I would wish to have it sent me, carefully packed in a box, by the wagon (for I would not trust it by sea), that I may obtain their opinion. The charges I shall very cheerfully pay; and if it proves to be Penn's picture, I shall be gratefully obliged to your Lordship for leave to take a copy of it, and will cheerfully return the original.'"¹²—*Lord Kames's Life*, by Lord Woodhouselee, p. 265.

Lord Woodhouselee's "Memoirs of the Life of Lord Kames" states that the portrait referred to was sent to Dr. Franklin and never returned.

It proved to be the portrait of Admiral Penn—the father of William. The last trace of this picture is that Richard Bache, a grandson of Dr. Franklin, placed it about 1809 in the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

assigns the dresses introduced into this picture to a period thirty years afterward, "if," says he, "they were ever worn at all." He ascribes with apparent justice the selection of dresses to West's *recollections* of what he had seen the Quakers wear—his father among the number—in his early youth in Pennsylvania. It is certain, from an original letter now before me, addressed in 1775 to his brother William, that he had introduced into the group a striking full-length portrait of his father and one of a brother whom he styles "of Reading."

This picture of Penn unfortunately, with all its imperfections, has formed the prototype for nearly all the portraits introduced to the American public. It is the one from which Inman's fine painting was made by order of the Society for commemorating the landing of Penn, for the certificates of stock for the United States Bank, and for all the official effigies hitherto issued by State or City authority.

Independent of the meaningless face which belies the real Penn, currency has thus been given to a supposed indorsement by him of principles totally foreign to those he actually expressed,—that an irremovable hat and drab clothes were needed for Friends' tents. William Penn was a gentleman by birth, by education, and by, what is sometimes found independently of both, instinct. He "knew"—to use his own words—"no religion that destroys courtesy, civility, and kindness, which, rightly understood, are great indications of true men, if not of good Christians."

The famous hat story is preserved as indicative of his independence and of his abhorrence of what would be construed into *reverence* for men; but no instance throughout his whole life can be cited where he was wanting in respect to his equals, or where he forced himself into the society of his inferiors and kept his hat upon his head, as an assertion, not of independence, but of superiority.

As to the style of the hat actually worn by him, it was simply that of the period. An anecdote has been preserved of him that sufficiently indicates this. When asked by King James II. the differences between the Catholic and the Quaker religions, he made a comparison between the hat worn by the King, which was adorned by feathers and ribbons, and his own, which was plain. "The only difference," replied Penn, "hes in the ornaments which have been added to thine." Thus the cut, shape and material of his hat

could not have varied from the standard of his day; nor would it have been in keeping with his known character to adopt any peculiarity (of shape or color) in dress to attract attention. His practice, and that of Friends of his day, was in conformity with the rules of their Society, at that time sufficiently evidenced from an original manuscript volume of "Advices by the Yearly Meeting of

in wearing *superfluity* of apparel;" and again, in 1694: "We tenderly advise all, both old and young, to keep out of the world's corrupt language, manners, and vain, needless customs and fashions in apparel;" while similar cautions are reiterated "not to launch into the vain customs and fashions too prevalent among the professors of Christianity." Down to the very middle of the last



THE NATIONAL MUSEUM PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM PENN., AT THE AGE OF 52.

Friends" in my possession. Under date of 1695 is this entry: "Advised, that all that profess the truth keep to plainness in apparel, as becomes the truth, and that none wear long-lapped sleeves, or coats gathered at the sides, or superfluous buttons, or *broad ribbons* about their hats, or long curled periwigs." This volume of advices begins in 1681. In 1682, the first reference to dress, Friends are advised "to take heed that they be not found

in the last century no directions are to be found as to *drab* colors or any especial cut of coat. It was not till about 1760 that the then existing style seems to have become crystallized into a uniform for those professing Friends' principles, and probably at the same time that the hat-on-head theory was made an essential indication of their adherence to "the Truth."

These errors, as has been intimated, are

unfortunately encouraged by West's picture. So far as it claims to represent Penn's appearance, bearing, or habits, we must entirely repudiate it. The only portrait known as genuine of Penn until a few years since, represents him as a youth of twenty-two, and in a style of dress utterly at variance with his matured views. He wears a full suit of armor, though his head is uncovered.

This picture was painted from life, it is believed, in Ireland, when he had "a modish person grown—quite the fine gentleman." It was presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania by Granville Penn, who calls it "a perfect portrait." The name of the artist I have not been able to learn. It has been admirably engraved by Schoff, and Mr. Bancroft very judiciously adopted it twenty-five years ago in his "History of the United States" in preference to the West likeness.

We are in 1876 enabled to present to the people of the United States William Penn as he really looked and really dressed while in the full maturity of his powers. The authority for so doing and the circumstances seem to call for some detail.

Mrs. Maria Webb, of Dublin, who had investigated "the Penns," communicated the existence of an original portrait of William Penn, which she had discovered, through a correspondent in County Durham, England, to be in possession of a landed proprietor by the name of Allan. A *carte de visite* from this picture she sent to Samuel L. Smedley, of Philadelphia. This seemed to demand investigation.

Surtees, in his "History of the County of Durham," disclosed the existence of an ancient seat, Blackwell Grange on the Tees in that county, and thus describes a valuable collection of paintings which had been made by George Allan, Esq., an indefatigable antiquary and virtuoso of the middle of the last century. They "filled every panel, and gradually insinuated themselves along the passage, and clothed the walls of the great staircase. Of the portraits, some of the most remarkable are Anna Boleyn, by Holbein; Sir Henry Wootton, by Sir Peter Lely; Lady Castlemaine, by Lely; William, Earl of Pembroke, and his Lady, by Jansen; a gallant portrait of Lord Fairfax, by Lely; a lion hunt, by old Coyle; a landscape, by Teniers; the head of a corpse, horribly expressive, by Caracci. The collection includes several admirable crayon drawings by Francis Place, fine heads of

Charles II., and of William Penn and his wife."^{*}

Letters to the present owner of Blackwell Grange proving fruitless to secure a copy of this Penn portrait for the National Museum of Independence Hall, a gentleman about starting for Europe was requested to pay a visit to Mr. Allan, and if, upon inspection on the spot, the circumstances warranted it, to secure a copy. Mr. John Jay Smith, pleasuring in the summer of 1874 at a watering-place, Saltburn-by-the-Sea, wrote upon the 5th of August, 1874: "I have made a pretty long excursion from here to inspect the portraits of William Penn and his wife. They are undoubtedly authentic, as declared by Surtees, and Penn's is very lovely. The photograph conveys but a slight idea of his manly and sweet face. Mr. Allan received me very kindly indeed, and, though he declined letting the portraits go out of his house, he will allow the artist to see and copy them."

This was accordingly done, but proved only the beginning of the vicissitudes of the picture before a satisfactory result was attained. The copy, completed as to the head, but with the background unfinished, and the bust and garments but dimly shadowed, was brought to Philadelphia, and intrusted to another hand to complete.

By an unfortunate misapprehension, the color of the coat, to suit modern notions of "Quaker colors," was changed. The background was made to correspond in tone, and then (O ye Gods!), finishing "made the head look very slight, so that the artist had to go over it all, changing it as

^{*} Horace Walpole, in his anecdotes, tells us that Mr. Francis Place of County Durham, England, was placed as clerk to an attorney in London, where he continued till 1665, when he quitted the profession that was contrary to his inclinations and commenced the pursuit of the arts for which he had talents. His genius is described as fanciful, but erratic. He painted, designed, and etched excellently, but merely for his own amusement. He was the first to introduce mezzotints in England. Ralph Thoresby says Mr. Place discovered an earth for, and a method of, making porcelain, which he put in practice at the Manor House of York, of which manufacture he gave him a fine mug for his Museum. We also learn that Mr. Place discovered porphyry at Mount Sorrel in Leicestershire, of which he had a piece to grind colors on. He seldom resided in London, and in his rambles, he painted, drew, and engraved occasionally. In the reign of Charles II. he was offered a pension of £500 a year to draw the Royal Navy, but declined accepting it, as he could not endure confinement or dependence. Mr. Place died in 1728, and his widow, quitting the Manor House in York, disposed of his paintings. There are two heads of Mr. Place extant, one by himself, the face only finished, and another by Murray.

little as possible, but getting more strength of color and finish into it, working on the face as lightly as possible, simply to make it a little less rough and unfinished than it was!!"

Thus, all the labor of again securing permission to make a second copy had to be gone over again, and again letters to the owner of the Grange as well as to the artist were treated with silent disregard. Glad to ascribe this to want of proper addresses, an appeal was made to the distinguished Philadelphia artist, Miss Anna Lea, now resident in London. Through her, Henry J. Wright, the copyist, a man of unquestionable ability, was found. But it then appeared that his professional services had been farmed out to a picture-broker, who haggled over the conditions, through a course of several letters, and sought to impose conditions utterly inconsistent with his position or that of his copyist.

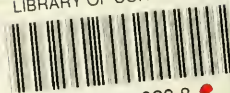
Having been finally brought to terms, the order was given in December, 1874, with peremptory directions that no delay should occur. The pictures were completed early in the following year, but the fellow kept the pictures for his own purposes till the following May, and they did not arrive in Philadelphia until June.

Here another difficulty was encountered, for William Penn's portrait was not permitted by the Collector of the Customs to be placed in Independence Hall without paying toll to the United States authorities. "The Founder of Pennsylvania, and Hannah his Wife," were placed in close confinement for forty days and forty nights till all the formalities complied with, the Secretary of the Treasury having cordially approved a free passport, these noble likenesses were placed in "visual juxtaposition" with the original painting of the Treaty by West.

Both genuine portraits, the Historical Society portrait at the age of 22, and this National Museum portrait at the age of 52, seem to realize the recorded description of Penn as "eminently handsome, the expression of his countenance remarkably pleasing and sweet, his eye dark and lively, and his hair flowing gracefully over his shoulders." His predominant trait of benevolence stands out in both of these portraits,—especially in the latter, the noble brow, expressive eyes, firm but gentle mouth, speak that "sweet reasonableness," characteristic of the pioneer, on this continent, of true peace on earth, and good-will toward men.



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